



Southeast News

PUBLISHED BY THE SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Volume 35

November & December, 1984

Number 4



Greetings and Blessings!

The joys of this Season come to us and to the world because of God's Love and God's Presence in our midst. In spite of the trouble and tragedy that marks so much of our human journey here on earth, this season of the year reminds us of the joys that are always to be found.

This is a time to pause and be reflective and thankful for: the gifts of family and friends and all they mean to us; the gifts of dedication and commitment that are to be found in the churches of our Southeast Conference; the challenge that God places before us as we come to the end of one year and the beginning of the next; the prayers for peace and justice that come from all parts of the earth as God's people re-dedicate themselves to the joy and love to be found in the Kingdom of our Lord.

All of us on the Southeast Conference and Regional OCLL staff count it as one of our blessings to serve with each of you in the work of the Kingdom in this place.

May all the blessings and joys of this Holy Season be with all of us.

Warren A. Blankenhorn

*Or, peace & joy,
Barbara Miller David E. Hox
Joyce Myers Kathy Martin
Jean M. Hess
Ernest O. Floyd*

ANNUAL MEETING

On June 15th, we came from all over the Southeast to St. Bernard's Abbey in Cullman, Alabama. We were 101 delegates, 39 ministers, 48 youth and 25 visitors from 46 churches of the UCC in the Southeast.

We came representing individual churches, fiercely independent as only former congregationalists can be, reflecting many viewpoints, many heritages, many traditions. But we were united for these days as the United Church of Christ, dealing with our house business, worshipping together in the beautiful chapel of the Abbey and enjoying fellowship with those of our religious tradition.

We dealt with such necessary issues as budget and nominations and reports from commissions on Christian Education, Church and Ministry, Outreach and Women in Church and Society.

We broke up into small groups to discuss issues emerging from those reports where we were able to share ideas on a more informal basis.

We dealt with the mission of the United Church of Christ at work throughout the world. Former missionaries of the United Church Board for World Ministries were honored and recognized. The keynote speaker was Dr. David Stowe, Executive Secretary of the UCBWM. In his address we heard the inspiring story of the strength of the church in China today...about how the UCBWM is at work throughout the world, training local church leadership, stepping in to help when disasters hit and affect the life of millions. We learned that, for the first time in the history of Christianity, the number of non-white Christians outnumbers those who are white.

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

December, 1984

24-25 Conference Office Closed for Christmas

25 MERRY CHRISTMAS

January, 1985

- 1 New Years Day-Conference Office closed.
- 12 Annual Meeting Planning Committee Meeting - Conference office-Atlanta
- 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday-Conference Office closed
- 18-25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

February, 1985

- 1-2 Board of Directors (SEC)
Atlanta, Conference Office

Ensminger Family Honored

The Ensminger family was honored by Southern Union State Junior College, Wadley, Alabama in July, 1984. A dedication ceremony was held renaming the college library as the McClintock-Ensminger Library.

Dr. Fred P. Ensminger was Conference Superintendent for the Congregational Christian churches, serving churches in an area roughly the same as our present Southeast Conference. Dr. Ensminger saw the need for an educational center where rural youth could gain education and where prospective ministers could be trained. His dreams led to the formation of Southern Union College in 1934. He recruited some of the first students and faculty, and served on the Board of Trustees. His wife, Annie Bennett Ensminger, besides being mother of four sons, was a teacher and became a member of the Southern Union faculty.

(Continued on page 4)

WOMEN IN THE SPIRIT: *called & free*

We marched into Milwaukee, nearly 2000 women strong - all of us expecting an experience. We joined hands and sang of the "Spirit who embraces daughters, embraces sons" and the experience was good.

It was not an experience without pain, and certainly not without joy. I, for one, found that my life had been a sheltered one. I, and many others like me, experienced a raising of consciousness - our eyes were opened to the pain of many of our sisters and brothers and we grieved - and we grew.

We listened to speeches, attended workshops, learned our history through quilting - and we worshiped together. We listened to "Sweet Honey In The Rock" sing. Their messages were of suffering - prejudice, hunger, war...The line I most remembered was: "We cannot rest until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons, is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers' sons." And I, a white mother, was ashamed because I knew they sang the truth. And I cried to hear it. Yet I was filled with joy because I knew my convictions had been awakened. I am "Called and Free" and I too must not rest.

And I heard a woman say, "Many of us are only one man away from poverty" and was reminded of the growing numbers of women in poverty - women who cannot earn enough to feed their children. I cried to think of the small tender ones who go to bed hungry - and not just across the ocean but across my town. And so another calling - for although I am free to, I cannot ignore their need - I am the mother of three.

In the final worship service, breads of all types were presented for communion - breads to represent all women: Cornbread for Southern women, both black and white; saltines for the senior citizens who are forced to live on crackers and thin soup; all types of bread for all types of women. And as we took communion we knew that God was truly among us. To close the Second National Meeting of UCC Women, we formed a chain of love and sang, and prepared to take our callings home.

I came home knowing that my old ways of thinking had been torn apart. But I came home feeling more whole and I thank God for the experience.

Kathy Martin



Women
Moving
In The Spirit

SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE WOMEN'S RETREAT
November 9-11, 1984

This Women's Retreat was a spiritual gift. To work with so many dedicated Christians was a powerful experience.

The weekend began with the spirit moving through the keynote message and worship led by the Rev. Helen Pearson, UCC minister. She raised the story of Mary and Martha one more time and allowed each person to experience this story through her own life.

The Rev. June Doster, Disciples of Christ minister led the Bible study on Saturday morning. She presented many resources and helped each woman gain new insights into the readings of Paul.

Rev. Helen Pearson completed the Saturday event by bringing into perspective the highlights from the speeches and workshops. She called us to be women in the spirit moved by "the power to do what we can do."

On Sunday morning the women celebrated a special communion service. The lines that follow were first heard at the National Women's Meeting. The women from the Southeast Conference presented the bread as symbols of women's experience and diversity within the family of God.

"I offer this corn bread in remembrance of Southern women, black and white, who have carried it in school lunch boxes, fried or baked it as a mainstay of a simple diet of greens and salt pork...

I offer this day-old white bread, staple of life for many women and children living on less than subsistence income...

Around the world and through the centuries, women have planted, tended, harvested, and

ground the grain... Even when broken in body, ground down by tedious or pressured hours, women yearn to have and bring the bread of presence to our world. We work for the bread of life! He was recognized in the breaking of bread. As we break bread together now, may we recognize the Christ among us!"

BROOKLAWN

Brooklawn, the oldest Health & Human Service Ministry related to the United Church of Christ, has a new mission - an Adolescent Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Center.

Open since April, 1983, Brooklawn has 44 licensed beds. The Alcoholics Anonymous or Minnesota approach to treatment is used.

Brooklawn has been zoned by the Stewardship Council of the UCC to the Southeast Conference since about 1960. Staff is available to come to your Church or Church Organization or Association meeting to present a program on Brooklawn and the disease of alcoholism and other drug dependency. We will be happy to send printed material also.

We advise you of this program in the event you may want to recommend or refer patients to our Center. We have had one patient from Alabama.

Please write to:

Brooklawn
P. O. Box 32336
Louisville, Kentucky 40232
Or call collect (502) 451-5177

National Youth Event Enjoyed

Clouds of brightly colored helium filled balloons floated skyward as President Post and over 1500 youth and advisors looked on, and so ended the 1984 National Youth Event. It was Thursday and they had arrived on Sunday. They spent the week learning, singing, loving and trying to find the directions the Lord would have them go. There were movies, dances, workshops on clowning, prison ministry, and many other important issues.

The Southeast Conference had 25 youth and advisors in attendance at the University of Illinois in Urbana/Champaign on July 29-August 2, 1984. The theme of the National Youth Event was "Seeds of God Rooted in Faith"

ENSMINGER FAMILY (Continued)

By that time Ross Ensminger, Fred and Annie's son, was a young pastor with two years of college teaching experience. He became president of the new school and guided it through 12 years - difficult years because it was a small school (started with twenty students) with little money, and those were years of depression and war.

Margaret, Ross' wife, served as college correspondent and financial secretary, making a number of fund-raising trips to the New England states.

The Dedication Chairman of the Southern Union State Junior College Alumni Association writes that the dedication is "to recognize the personal sacrifice and loving dedication that the Ensminger family poured out for Southern Union during some of its most difficult days."

(Ross and Margaret Ensminger are now members of the Pleasant Hill Community Church in TN)

SUSAN R. STIFLER

Susan Reed Stifler, a resident of the Wharton Nursing Home, Uplands, Pleasant Hill, TN, celebrated her 100th birthday on August 16, 1984, with a quiet visit from her son and daughter.

Susan was interviewed recently in her room at Wharton. She was occupied with her favorite pastime - reading history and The Wall Street Journal, which publication keeps her up to date on national and international news.

Mrs. Stifler was born in the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts. Her family had been members of Congregational churches for eight generations. After graduating from Mount Holyoke College she attended the University of Illinois in Urbana and got her M.A. in History. The university had just opened a graduate school, so Susan stayed on and worked on Massachusetts' Church History and Congregationalism. In 1913 she received a doctorate, the first woman to receive that degree from the University. Her book entitled, Church and State in Massachusetts (1691-1740) was published.

Two years following her marriage to William W. Stifler, an instructor in physics at Columbia University, they were sent to China where Dr. Stifler was connected with the Rockefeller Foundation in Peking. They remained there six years. Upon their return to this country, she

was a faculty wife, as her husband taught at Amherst College, a mother, and a part-time history instructor at Mount Holyoke. In 1960 she wrote and had published a history of the H. B. Smith Company, a business which was a pioneer in domestic central heating. The book was dedicated to her father, John Reed, who was president of the company.

She was widowed in 1954 and remained on in Amherst for 14 years. In 1968 she moved to Nashville to be near her son and was an active member of the Brookmeade United Church of Christ. In 1977 she came to Uplands and joined Pleasant Hill Community Church. Susan says of her work in the church throughout the years, "I was always on the Missionary Committee and served three times on pastoral search committees."

Still active in service to others, Mrs. Stifler visits Wharton residents confined to their rooms and pushes the wheelchairs of friends to the various activities in the Home. She claims, "It doesn't feel any different to be 100!"

Rededication of Marion 1st

First Congregational UCC of Marion, AL, was placed on the National Register of Historical Places on December 17, 1982, by the National Historical Commission. With the help of grants, they have restored their building to its original beauty.

On Sunday, October 14, 1984, they had a Service of Dedication. The Honorable Rev. Andrew Young, Mayor of Atlanta, was the Keynote Speaker.

The history of the Marion church is an impressive one: It was established in 1869, organized in Lincoln School, by local people and representatives of the American Missionary Association. In the summer of 1952, Rev. Andrew Young was a student who served the Marion church as a Youth Minister and met his future wife, Jean, who's family were members there.

The Southeast Conference joins in the celebrating of this day of rededication with Marion, First and their pastor, The Rev. Thomas L. Threadgill.

ANNUAL MEETING (Continued from page 1)

In what can only be called a spirit of genuine openness and caring, we dealt with two potentially divisive resolutions on evangelism and peace which had been presented. The willingness to hear all sides but to keep the conference on schedule was masterfully handled by our moderator and parliamentarian. For me, it brought renewed understanding of that saying "unity inspite of diversity."

There was much besides the meetings, of course. There was a worship service conducted by Dr. Paul Johnson from Montgomery First, and the singing of their youth choir, the inspiration of the communion service served by UCC young people in the beautiful chapel...there was the pleasure of watching the young together...there was the hilarity of Ole Thermometer U, a spoof on academia which could only be pulled off by the likes of Warren Blankenhorn, David Beebe and others...but most of all there was the pleasure of meeting our brothers and sisters of the UCC family in the Southeast. It is good indeed to see the UCC active and alive in the Southeast and to be a part of that fellowship.

Jane Cummings, Secretary

LETTERS FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

(Rev. Joyce B. Myers, Southern Associate for the Office of Church Life and Leadership has been on sabbatical in Central America. We will be printing some of her letters to her pastor, Rev. Bill Scott, Central, Atlanta, in this and future editions of the Southeast News.)

Tegucigalpa, Honduras
October 11, 1984

Dear Bill,

My head and heart are so full that I don't know how to begin to share it all with you and all my dear friends at Central...

We have been in Honduras a week and have had a year's worth of experiences! Here are a few highlights/impressions/thoughts:

---Mountains, palms, flame trees, great beauty---side by side with poverty and misery---the second poorest country in the Hemisphere.

---Our partner church (Iglesia Evangelica y Reformada) full of youth, hope, and ambiguities. (I had the privilege of preaching twice last Sunday, in Spanish, in the towns of El Progreso and Yoro.)

---A dusty ride in the back of a pickup truck going to visit a model farm high in the northern mountains. A life-changing project of CEVER (which we support through OCWM).---Three heavy hours in our Embassy listening to our ambassador and military officials telling of our role here. A feeling of great despair. The answer to Central America's economic and social problems is NOT arms and more arms...

---A courageous Honduran lawyer telling us that we are guilty of intolerance. We feel our way of thinking and doing can and should be imposed on all peoples. He said, "It's like thinking your corn--healthy and nutritious in the U.S.--can grow in any soil and climate, even the Antarctic."

---Watching a tired woman washing Chiquita bananas standing in the assembly line at a packing plant in La Lima.---Hearing a young pastor tell of his church's work with "campesinos," helping them organize a cooperative. ---The governor of Cortes--the first woman! sharing her heartache over prostitution and the sale of young girls...

---The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees deputy telling of the plight of the refugees in Honduras fleeing from the fighting in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. ---Our group of 18 UCC clergy and laity from 12 states praying together "Oh Lord, make us instruments of Thy peace.."

And so may it be with all of us who hear the name of the Prince of Peace.

Blessings and love,
Joyce

THE FRANK C. LAUBACH STAMP

The late Dr. Frank C. Laubach, a pioneer missionary of our United Church Board for World Ministries, has been honored by the United States Postal Service with a thirty-cent stamp in the "Great American" series. The stamp was issued on September 2, 1984, the one hundredth anniversary of Dr. Laubach's birth.

Frank and Effa Laubach went to the Philippines in 1915 as missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,

(Continued on page 6)

FRANK C. LAUBACH (Continued)

a predecessor of the UCBWM. Along with their Filipino colleagues, they developed a literacy program for Muslim Filipinos. Dr. Laubach was the first person to write their Maraneio dialect in Roman Script.

Worldwide literacy was born through that effort, and over the years, increasing recognition of his work took Dr. Laubach to many parts of the world in response to requests from governments for assistance in developing literacy programs.

By the time of his death in 1970, Dr. Laubach had carried his literacy ministry to 103 countries and had assisted in the development of literacy programs and materials in 313 languages.

.....

BUDGET PLANNING - A SUCCESS STORY

It is nearing time for churches to prayerfully plan their 1985 church budget. As Chairperson of the Outreach Commission, may I encourage each church of our Southeast Conference to give serious consideration to increasing your gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission. There are many areas of ministry such as: Youth Leadership, Christian Education Leadership, New Church Starts, Church Renewal, etc., calling out for help but without financial resources such as those given by individual churches we are unable to respond as we should. Add to these calls for assistance the ever increasing needs beyond our shores, and you can readily see a real challenge to we Christians of the Southeast Conference. I am a firm believer that Christians who are challenged to a worthy cause will do their best to meet same.

Everyone likes a success story! May I share our success story here at The United Church of Huntsville?

In 1979 we had a budget of \$21,505--which ended up \$31,509. In 1984, our budget is \$86,435 and our Year-to-date report gives every indication that we will make our budget. Needless to say, our people are extremely happy and our friends throughout the Conference share this feeling. There are several factors involved in this success story: membership growth, a good economy in Huntsville, plus a new approach to budget planning for the coming year.

Four years ago we adopted a new system for our church budget planning. The latter part of October, an open church budget planning

meeting is held on a Sunday evening. All departments are requested to bring their proposed budget needs for the coming year in writing. Everyone is invited to come and be a part of planning for the coming year. Not all come, but a goodly number have turned out and the number increases each year. Once the meeting is called to order, the treasurer gives everyone a copy of the Year-to-date financial report which enables each to see how we look financially. Questions are entertained. Once everyone is satisfied with the present year budget, we move to the proposed budget for the coming year. The departmental needs are looked at and discussed. The inflation factor is considered in all areas. Then we begin talking about our church's mission. We consider local benevolences, special offerings and Our Church's Wider Mission budgets. We set goals for local benevolences and special offerings; however, we set in concrete Our Church's Wider Mission. Our people recognize the fact that they have a church today because others gave to Our Church's Wider Mission in years past, so Outreach is extremely important to us. Our local benevolences and Our Church's Wider Mission gifts are around 14% this year and we look forward to the day this will be at least 25% of our budget.

After much discussion our proposed budget is completed and ready for publication through word of mouth, church newsletter and Sunday bulletins. In November we have our Stewardship Dinner at which time pledges are made for the coming year. Those who are not present are visited during the month of December. In January the budget is adopted at the annual meeting. Working together has been successful for us!

Promotional materials used are obtained through United Church of Christ's KeyPak. This year's theme is "Growing Through Giving." Other very useful publications are: Before you Decide, What Are You Giving, and What Will You Give. All above materials may be ordered through KeyPak at reasonable prices.

H. Eugene Keen

.....

AWARD FOR HISTORY OF PLEASANT HILL ACADEMY

The Congregational Christian Historical Society has given its President's Award to Iris Webb Glebe for her book, Thy Loving Children Still- History and Memories of Pleasant Hill Academy.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM JOYCE MYERS

Managua, Nicaragua
October 18, 1984

Dear Bill,

We leave Nicaragua in the morning - and we go with despair, and yet with hope. Despair over the continuing war here and all the loss of life --and of time and energy and money that should be going into nation-building. And despair and shame because of our government's role in that war.

But we also go with hope because God is at work in Nicaragua Libre, the land of Sandino. After 45 years of oppression and dictatorship under Somoza, people are finding new life, with freedom and dignity and a sense of purpose.

Some vignettes:

---A "sampesino" rejoicing with us that he and 41 other families, formerly landless, now share in a cooperative farm and where before the Revolution he couldn't even give his children a cup of milk a day, now each family gets two quarts and all the food they need--and his children are glowing with health. ---Driving further into the mountains and finding more and more soldiers. Overnight in the town of Esteli we heard shots and were reminded that the Contras are anywhere and everywhere....---Terrible shortages of food, medicines, etc., in large part due to the U.S. economic boycott of Nicaragua (plus local supplies going to the war zone). ---Sharing in the "misa Campesina," a mass in the Nicaraguan context using folk art, music and images with great lay participation and an interpretation of the faith from a theology of liberation perspective. ---Learning from a young pastor about CEPAD, a church agency the UCC helps support, and its development work and its theological training program for rural pastors.

---Listening to a young woman telling of the new opportunities for women in Nicaragua (some of them thrust upon them by the war situation).

---Feeling one in Christ with a couple as they shared with us their involvement in a Christian Base Community and how when they reached out to the poor and their needs, they found a new and deeper faith. They "glowed" as they shared this with us--even though their two best friends lost their lives by similar involvement...

---Heartache listening to an Embassy official describe U.S. policy toward Nicaragua and the conditions under which we would invade.....

---Feeling hope...about the elections next week in Nicaragua....---Hearing an appeal by a nun that Christians of Nicaragua & the US join to stop the war and bring peace and justice. And that is the challenge to us all...Blessings & Love, Joyce.

GARDEN CITY CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL

On August 19, 1984, Garden City Congregational United Church of Christ celebrated 100 years of existence. Begun as a Evangelical Lutheran Church, it was officially formed in 1884 and its first building erected that year.

As the Lutheran constituency grew smaller the church ceased being a Lutheran group and sold its building in 1920 to the newly formed Congregational group there in Garden City.

Since that time it has steadily grown under the leadership of several pastors including Rev. Annie Campbell who served from 1948-55. The present minister, Rev. Roger Whitley has served since 1968. The church building was moved back from its original site in 1952 with the widening of the highway and the Fellowship Hall was built in 1963, along with new siding placed over the weatherboard in 1978. Now a beautiful and functional sanctuary this is the original building of 100 years ago.

A large congregation attended the Centennial Service and Homecoming on August 19. The Conference Minister, the Rev. Dr. Emmett O. Floyd was the speaker. The church is proud of its history and proud to be an active member of the Alabama-Tennessee Association and the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Dear Readers,

We are trying something new again! We hope you will let us know if the small print is too much of a hardship on your eyes. We are doing our best to make this our "Communicator" so please let us know what you think of this new style. Thank you for your patience when we fall behind with publication. We will try to publish every second month in 1985. That's our "New Year's Resolution!"

Kathy Martin, Editor

Merry Christmas

NEWS AND NOTES

Rev. Holly Sue Nelson, a member of Brookmeade Congregational Church, U.C.C. in Nashville, TN, was installed as Staff Chaplain at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center in June, 1984.

We celebrate with Trinity Congregational U.C.C. in Athens, Alabama. They recently completed repayment of their mortgage grant to the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries.

The Rev. Joseph H. Irwin of Button Gwinnett United Church of Christ resigned his pastorate there as of September 30, 1984. He left the church in Lilburn, Georgia, to be pastor of a church in Pennsylvania.

St. John's United Church of Christ in Cullman, Alabama celebrates their new Associate Pastor. He is the Rev. Herbert J. Young. He and his family come to St. John's from Wooster, Ohio.

Rev. Ira W. Chace is the interim minister at Button Gwinnett United Church of Christ in Lilburn, Georgia.

Our sympathies are with Rev. George A. Fidler of St. John's UCC in Cullman, AL, who recently lost his brother.

Mr. Scott Fairchild has resigned his position as treasurer of the Southeast Conference. Mr. Fairchild will be relocating in Florida. We wish to thank him for his dedication and service to the Southeast Conference and wish him well in his new home.

If you have audio-visuals which were checked out from the Conference office, please return them as soon as you are through with them. We will be completing an audit of these materials during the winter and it would be helpful to have all audio-visuals back in by that time. Thank you!

Please send any news items to:

Editor, Southeast News
P. O. Box 29883
Atlanta, Georgia 30359

SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

P. O. BOX 29883
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30359

Nonprofit Organization
U. S. Postage
PAID
Atlanta, Georgia
Permit No. 1546